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SELECT ESSAYS IN ANGLO-AMERICAN LEGAL HISTORY. Volume III. By various authors. Compiled and edited by a committee of the Association of American Law Schools. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 1909. pp. vi, 862.

With this volume the editors of "The Select Essays" have completed a voluntary task that has occupied more than three years. It remains to make some comment on their work as editors and on the volumes as a whole.

Their chief work was to select out of the field of magazine literature such articles as would give a connected account of the fundamental conceptions and institutions of the law from the historical standpoint. To do this has called for tact as well as learning. The result has met with general approval. The seventy-six essays fill some twenty-five hundred pages, — a thousand more than are in the three volumes of Holdsworth's History. In time they range from Chancellor Kent's letter in 1804, to 1908, although all but five were published within the past twenty-five years. Thirty-eight are by twenty-three English writers, thirty-six are by twenty-six Americans, and one each by a Frenchman and a German. One woman is represented. The editors have added several useful appendices and numerous biographical notes, and their prefaces are delightful in themselves and by contrast with the formal essays. To search the magazines, to weigh the possible selections, to choose and combine them so as to make a mosaic that should picture the long procession of topics in historical sequence and in due proportion, has been so well done as to justify the warmest praise.

Valuable as is the result of their labor evidenced by these substantial volumes, still it may be doubted whether the expectations of the chief promoter of the enterprise have been fully realized. When the idea was broached it was hoped that such articles could be found as would provide a text book on legal history for use in a special course of study in the schools, and it was hinted that this might be on the plan of a case book. In fact, the available material had to be supplemented by a considerable percentage from standard works, and the result cannot for a moment, as a text book, compare with Holdsworth, if one is looking for a systematic exposition. As a text book on the plan of a case book it is apparent that the series can make no claim. That the editors have failed in this regard is due to the dearth of suitable material.

It is also doubtful if these volumes will stimulate study more than if not reprinted. But if sufficient copies are provided they will be of service for convenient reference.

But in one other respect the enterprise has been worth while. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, writers were in a hurry. Their haven was the magazine, and the magazine was the repository of half-developed truths. It is worth while to realize from these volumes that this reproach is not true of law magazines. No one can fail to be impressed with the deep research, the deliberate construction, and the substantial worth of these essays. Again, this taking account of the labors of legal scholars for twenty-five years past is in itself a useful experiment, and the marshalling of the best they have thought and said will furnish an inspiration from which all should profit.

This is not the place to comment on these familiar essays. They are known of all men who take interest in the progress of sound learning. One feels in turning these pages that after all the narration of legal history is not an exception to the great law of progression that is seen in other fields of learning.

In conclusion one is tempted to say of these volumes, as the greatest of all law editors once said at the close of his labors: "There is nothing herein but may either open some windowes of the Law, to let in more light to the student by diligent search to see the secrets of the Law, or to move him to doubt, and to enable him to inquire and learne of the Sages what the Law together with the true reason thereof is."

N. A.